

**'B-S' PATROL #2¹: IDEOLOGY, NOT BUDGETARY CONDITIONS,
DRIVE BUMPERS-SASSER EFFORT TO GUT STRATEGIC DEFENSE**

(Washington, D.C.): The United States Senate is expected shortly to resume debate on the FY1993 Defense Department authorization bill, S.3114. When it does so, the Senate will have an opportunity to give fresh consideration to an insidious proposal by Senators Dale Bumpers (D-AR) and Jim Sasser (D-TN), one that would have the effect of reducing the President's request for anti-missile defenses by fully 37 percent.

The consequences of such a reduction are predictable and frightening: The Bumpers-Sasser amendment would, in the words of Amb. Henry Cooper -- the man responsible for realizing the Senate's direction of *last year* to begin deploying a limited defense against missile attack by 1996 (or as soon as possible thereafter), "fundamentally destroy" that program.

Explanation Implausible: Deficit Reduction Does Not Justify SDI Cuts

Somewhat less clear, however, is the motivation for the Bumpers-Sasser initiative. In preliminary debate on their amendment before the Senate recessed last month, Sens. Bumpers and Sasser suggested that they were principally moved to slash the missile defense budget on financial grounds. Both senators repeatedly said the United States simply cannot afford to spend \$4.3 billion on SDI at a time when the country is running huge budget deficits. Sen. Bumpers, for example, blithely asserted that the deficit is "a ten times bigger threat to this nation than the Soviet Union ever was."

Scarcely less hyperbolic were Sen. Bumpers' claims about the financial costs associated with providing a defense against ballistic missiles for the United States. On 7 August, the Senator claimed that the initial site would cost "\$80 billion." In fact, the actual cost of the initial site of 100 interceptors is around \$17 billion. Indeed, SDIO estimates that the *entire six-site defense system* -- complete with Brilliant Eyes space-based sensors -- will cost approximately \$35 billion, less than *half* the amount Sen. Bumpers indicated for a *single* site.

If the object of the Bumpers-Sasser exercise were simply budgetary discipline, moreover, the SDI program would appear to be an unlikely candidate for the sort of draconian cuts envisioned by their amendment. After all, the \$4.3 billion level from which the Senators propose to cut \$1 billion is itself a dramatic reduction from the amount the Bush Administration believes is necessary to protect the United States against missile attack.

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¹ This *Decision Brief* is the second in a series examining the various untenable arguments offered by Sens. Dale Bumpers and Jim Sasser to justify an amendment that would gut the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes program.

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The Senate Armed Services Committee in earlier action on the defense authorization bill already recommended a \$1.1 billion reduction in the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) system. Simple equity, if not conscientiousness in disciplining federal spending across-the-board, would seem to argue that *other* government programs -- which have not been sharply reduced by Congress -- would logically be considered for budgetary belt-tightening *before* one that has been gets ravaged further.

Senator Nunn Hits the Mark

A cut of this magnitude would not merely increase the expense and add unnecessarily to the risk associated with the program. As Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, pointed out in debate, it would also serve to "stretch out the program to such a degree that **it would render implausible any claim by Congress that we are on a steady course toward deployment of an initial ABM Treaty compliant defensive system, as we agreed to last year by a rather overwhelming vote.**"

Indeed, if the Senate is truly serious about avoiding wasteful defense spending and adding unnecessarily to the federal deficit, it must reject recommendations that would fund the SDI program at anything less than the level approved by its Armed Services Committee. "The alternative," Sen. Nunn observed, "would be to return to the wasteful years of the 1980s when \$3-4 billion was spent each year on SDI without any consensus by the Congress, without any direction, with compromises every year that left no direction and nothing was really [achieved] but endless research."

A Further Clue: Theater Defenses Exempt From 'Helping the Deficit'

Yet another indication that something *other than* concern about the deficit is behind the Bumpers-Sasser amendment can be found in its preferential treatment of Theater Missile Defenses (TMD). While every other aspect of the GPALS system is being dramatically reduced, TMD is funded at the same level that the Administration requested and the Senate Armed Services Committee recommended -- \$998 million.

Inevitably, this "fencing" of the TMD accounts exacerbates the damage being done to both near- and medium-term *strategic* defenses: It obliges the latter program elements to absorb an even greater cut than would be entailed were the reduction to be levied proportionately upon *all* components of the SDI program. Worse yet, **if permitted to become law, the Bumpers-Sasser amendment would have the effect of denying Americans living here the sort of protection against missile attack that will ultimately be made available to U.S. forces and allies overseas.**

Interestingly, according to yesterday's *Washington Times*, this appears to be the agenda not only of Messrs. Bumpers and Sasser but of the Clinton-Gore campaign. Citing remarks by an unnamed Clinton advisor in Little Rock, the *Times* reported that:

"...If elected president, [Mr. Clinton] would cut five-year spending for the Strategic Defense Initiative in half and scrap research into orbiting sensors and interceptors like 'Brilliant Pebbles.' **'All the space-based SDI stuff we would certainly cancel.'**"

"Mr. Bush last year endorsed [the Senate-initiated] plan to deploy an initial ground-based interceptor site as a limited defense against the accidental launch of an ICBM.

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But Mr. Clinton's advisors say it is unlikely their candidate would ever agree to deploy such a system on U.S. soil. His focus would be on theater defenses against tactical ballistic missiles, like the Scud, they said." (Emphasis added.)

The Bottom Line

Clearly, what is at work here is *ideology* -- not a genuine commitment to reducing the federal deficit in a manner consistent with U.S. security needs or providing for the national defense in the most cost-effective manner possible. The opposition to strategic defenses in general and to space-based defenses in particular stems from a lingering attachment to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Never mind that this document is hopelessly out-dated; that the party with whom it was fashioned no longer exists; that top Russian military figures have endorsed the Treaty's elimination²; or that myriad ballistic missile threats are emerging from quarters other than the former Soviet Union³, making the Treaty-imposed posture of permanent vulnerability recklessly irresponsible. For some members of the Senate, including Governor Clinton's running mate, Al Gore, the treaty remains sacrosanct; defenses it prohibits -- like space-based sensors and interceptors -- are anathema while systems it permits -- like anti-tactical or "theater" missile defenses are acceptable.

The Center for Security Policy believes that a time of mushrooming federal deficits and austerity in the defense budget is, indeed, a moment when the United States can ill-afford bad decisions with respect to strategic defense. **We can imagine *no worse decision, however, than that which the Senate is being asked to make: to deny the nation for ill-conceived and long-discredited ideological reasons* the most cost- and militarily effective approach to global theater defenses, to say nothing of homeland protection, available -- namely, the GPALS system and its Brilliant Pebbles interceptors.**

The Center calls upon Senators Bumpers and Sasser to come clean with their colleagues and with the American people: **A vote for their amendment is a vote for *no defense against missile attack for the United States and its citizens* -- unless, that is, they happen to be living or deployed overseas in an allied nation the Senators (and, it would appear, Gov. Clinton) care more about defending against such a threat than they do this country.**

The Center also urges President Bush to make clear that he will veto any legislation that would have same effect as the Bumpers-Sasser amendment on the Strategic Defense Initiative and on the national security. By so doing, he can not only do much to sharpen the differences between him and the Clinton-Gore campaign on defense and foreign policy issues. He can also ensure that one of the country's most egregious and dangerous vulnerabilities -- under which we have already lived too long thanks to the ideology of the ABM Treaty and its adherents -- is brought to an end as soon as possible.

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² See the Center's *Press Release* entitled, "Top Russian Military Officers Join Call for Effective Missile Defenses, 'Dropping' ABM Treaty," No 92-P 78.

³ See the Center's *Decision Brief* entitled 'B-S' Patrol: Sens. Bumpers and Sasser Wish Away Ballistic Missile Threat, Propose to Leave U.S. Vulnerable to It, No. 92-D 101, 29 August 1992.